

Chapter 5

Exploring the Microsoft Access User Interface

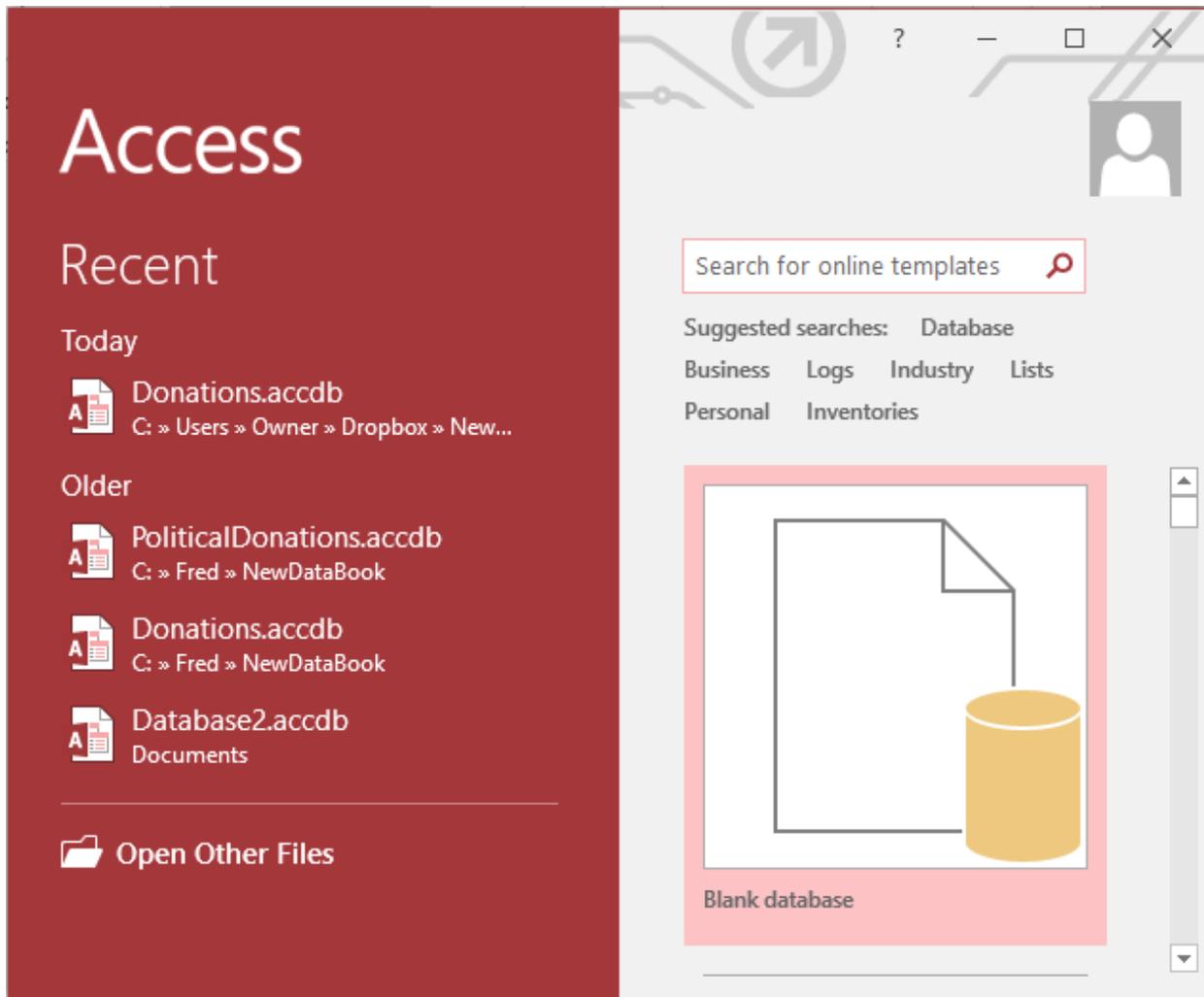
Summary: The Access user interface is easy to get used to. We'll cover some of the basic features here. The user interface in Access 2007, 2010 and 2013 are nearly identical for core features.

What you will learn:

Features of the basic user interface of Microsoft Access.

Getting started

When you first open Access 2016, you will have the option of creating a new database, or opening an existing database. Normally, you will create a new database for each new data project.



We will create a blank database.

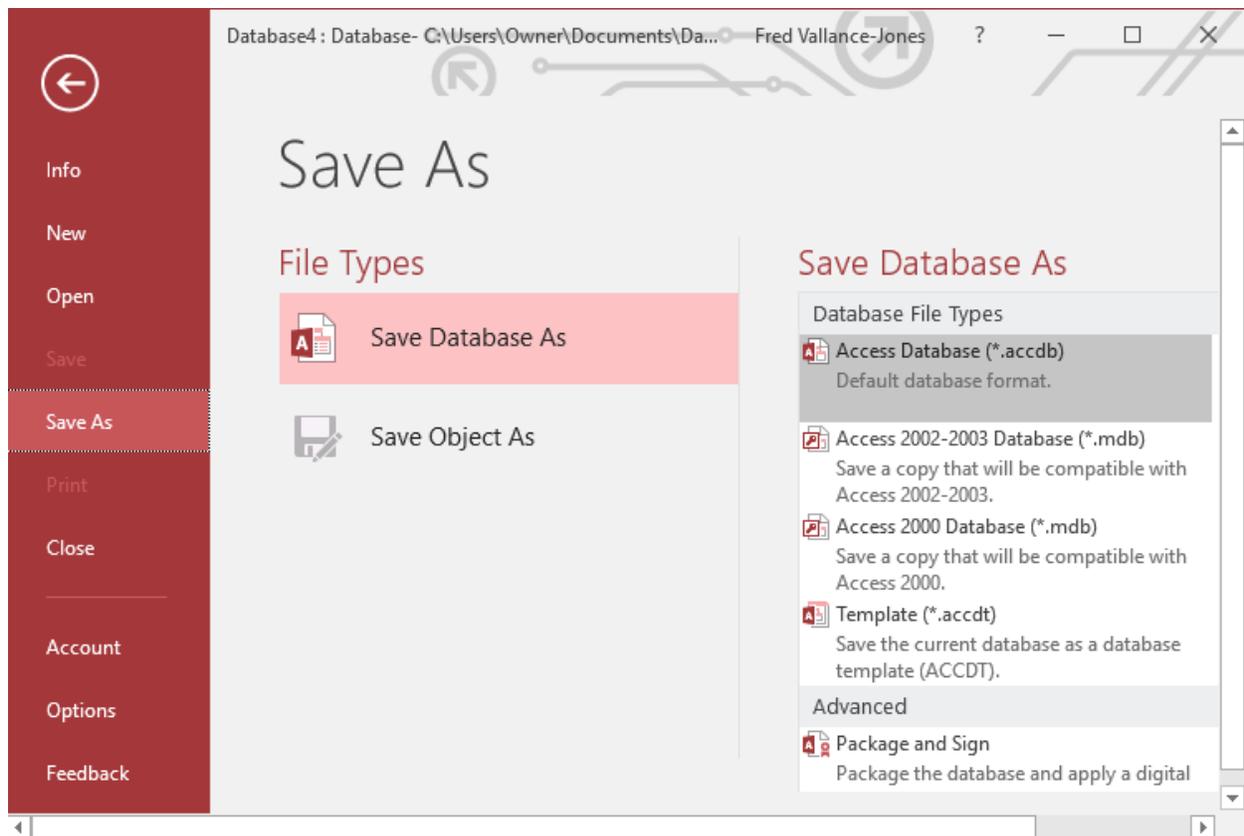
When Access opens a new database, you will see a new, empty table, ready for you to add fields and data. We'll explore table creation and data import in the tutorial

Task 1: Making Tables and Importing Data into Access.

Like other programs in the Microsoft Office suite, Access uses “ribbon” menu system in which commonly used commands are grouped together on a fat toolbar. You will likely find yourself using the File, Home, Create and External data ribbons most frequently.

File isn't really a ribbon, but instead gives access to all the standard operations for opening, saving and renaming the database and objects within it, as well as options for

configuring the database. The Save As command allows you to save the database with a name other than the default name (e.g. Database1), as well to save it in the more recent .accdb format, used since Access 2007, or the earlier .mdb formats. As a rule, you should use the newer format unless you absolutely need the database to be compatible with one of the older versions of Access going back to Access 2000. This could happen if you have to share the database with someone who owns one of the older versions.

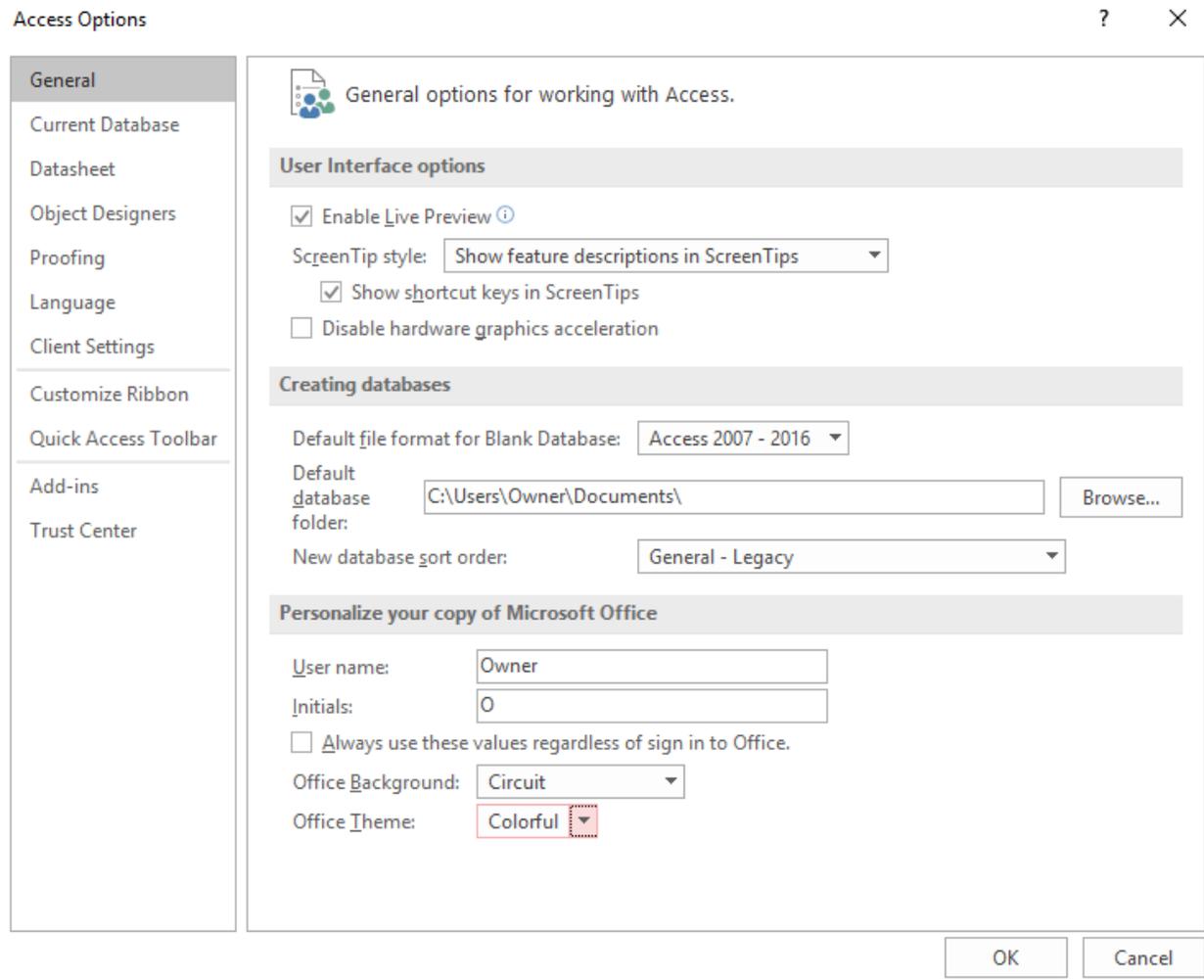


The same File>Save As routine is used to save individual tables and queries, when they are open in the user interface.

If you click on Options on the purple panel to the left, the configuration options for Access will open. We'll point out a few key ones.

On the General options screen you can change the default folder for saving new databases, as well as the default database format. Again, we'd recommend sticking with .accdb unless you expect to have to open the database in an earlier version of Access.

The General screen also gives you the option of changing the colour scheme and design of the user interface.



The Current Database screen permits a range of changes to how the database behaves. These include whether to have open windows arrayed as overlapping windows, or in tabs, whether to see a list of values in a field when using the filter, and whether to compact and repair the database every time it closes. Generally speaking, you can leave the default options as is and you will have a satisfactory user experience.

The Datasheet screen allows changes to how the datasheet appears.

The Object Designers screen contains options for how objects such as queries are designed. Probably the most important setting is the one labelled, SQL Server Compatible Syntax (ANSI 92). If checked for the current database, this will change aspects of the SQL query language used, to make it compatible with Microsoft's server database system SQLS Server. This will also set the wildcards used in LIKE queries to be the same as used by MySQL, as noted in Chapter 7.

Query design

Show table names

Output all fields

Enable AutoJoin

Query design font

Font: Segoe UI

Size: 8

SQL Server Compatible Syntax (ANSI 92)

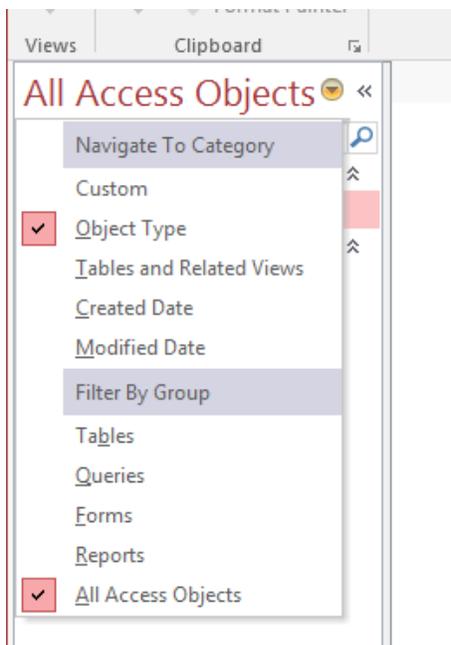
This database

Default for new databases

You can find a great deal more about the various options available in this Microsoft help file: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Set-user-options-for-the-current-database-29b6b7be-4c3b-43a7-b8f0-5e1c68f5adce#_toc309288143

The main user interface

Tables, and queries you have saved appear in the Navigation Pane to the left side of the screen. Clicking on the small downward-pointing arrow at the top of the Navigation Pane allows you to configure how various objects (tables, queries, etc.) are arrayed in the pane. This is mostly personal preference.



The default, object type, groups the objects together by type. The choice labeled Tables and Related Views groups all queries together with their associated tables. Tables shows only tables, and Queries only queries. You can also create custom groups, grouping together tables and queries by themes you choose.

Like other Microsoft Office products, Access uses the “ribbon” interface. Instead of separate menus and toolbars, the two are combined into a fat bar that appears across the top of the screen.

There is plenty of flexibility around the look of the ribbon, and even whether it appears. Right click anywhere on the ribbon to see options to customize the ribbon or hide it completely (collapse ribbon). You can always right click again to toggle the ribbon back on. Hiding it can be useful when you have a lot of data you want to view on your screen.

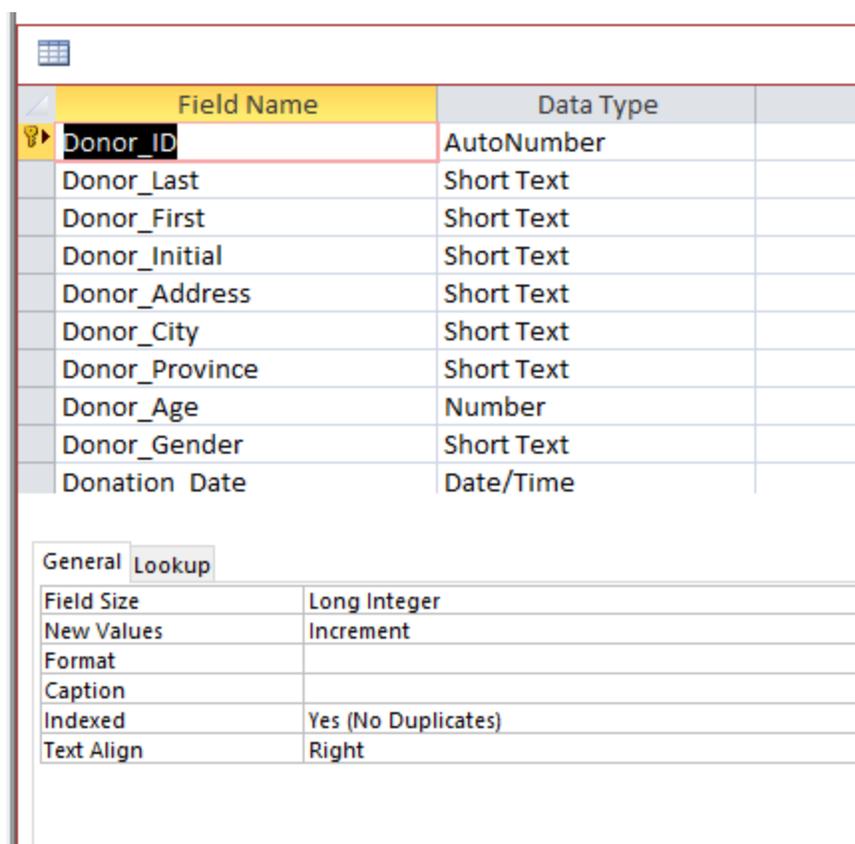
The **Home ribbon** contains commonly used commands that you use for manipulation of both tables and queries.



When a table is selected in the navigation pane, the View button allows you to toggle between viewing the data in the table (datasheet view) and the design of the table (design view).

Donations						
Donor_ID	Donor_Last	Donor_First	Donor_Initia	Donor_Address	Donor_City	Donor_State
1	Smith	Joanne	O	22 Any Street	Calgary	AB
2	Jones	Steve		57 Moneybags Court	Toronto	ON
3	Leblanc	Carole	X	212 Tormentine Cape	Dieppe	NB
4	Johnson	Gerald	F	55 Nonexistent Way	Calgary	AB
5	Stephenson	Brenda		21 Anywhere Avenue	Brandon	MB
6	Tremblay	Monique	O	16 Rue Vide	Morin	QC
7	Calhoun	David		99 Apex Landing	Hamilton	ON
8	Mills	Harold	R	65 Atlantic Lane	Halifax	NS
9	White	Mel	D	27 Sandstone Bluff	Charlottetown	PE
10	Silvers	Wanda	U	55 Assini-Red Fork	Winnipeg	MB
*	(New)					

Above is table datasheet view, below, table design view. You'll find more on table design in the tutorial **Making Tables and Importing Data into Access**.



Field Name	Data Type
Donor_ID	AutoNumber
Donor_Last	Short Text
Donor_First	Short Text
Donor_Initial	Short Text
Donor_Address	Short Text
Donor_City	Short Text
Donor_Province	Short Text
Donor_Age	Number
Donor_Gender	Short Text
Donation Date	Date/Time

General	
Field Size	Long Integer
New Values	Increment
Format	
Caption	
Indexed	Yes (No Duplicates)
Text Align	Right

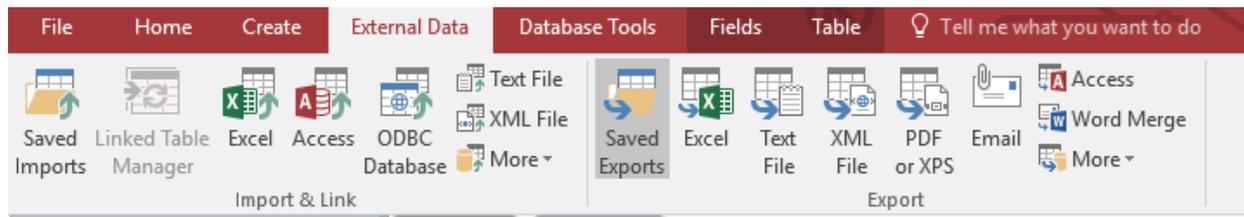
The Clipboard area of the ribbon contains all the standard commands for copying, pasting and cutting values.

In the Sort and Filter area, the Filter icon—it looks like a funnel--allows you to create filters, which are simple queries that allow you to narrow down the view of your data. This book focuses on the more powerful SQL queries, but you can find information online on how to use the filter functionality, if you like. The ascending and descending order sort icons allow you to sort columns in a table or query in much the same way as you would do in Access. Again, however, a query allows you to do the same, more powerfully.

The Text Formatting area allows you to change how text is formatted in database tables and queries. You can change the font, font size, font style and fill. Any changes you make will apply to all of the data in the selected table or query.

The Create ribbon allows you to create new tables and queries. These features are described in the tutorials **Making Tables and Importing Data into Access** and **Getting Started Writing Queries in Access**.

You will likely find yourself using the External Data ribbon whenever you need to import data from an external source.



This ribbon contains icons that start up wizards for importing data from Excel spreadsheets, delimited text files, and other file formats, including other Access databases. It also has links to wizards that permit the reverse, the export of data from Access tables and queries to Excel, delimited text, and other formats. You can even email a table or the output of a query, using Microsoft's cloud services.

Generally speaking, the user interface for Access is quite similar to that for Excel, its companion in the Office Professional suite. This makes it easier for users to make the transition from one to the other.

Please see the tutorial **Getting Started Writing Queries in Access** for a detailed discussion of the interface for writing SQL queries in Access.